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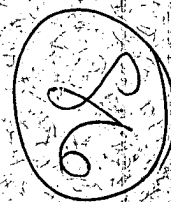


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imagery analysis report

Recent Military-Associated Construction in Northern Namibia (S)



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WNINTEL

Z-14581/82

IAR-0067/82

JUNE 1982

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RECENT MILITARY-ASSOCIATED CONSTRUCTION IN NORTHERN NAMIBIA (S)

INTRODUCTION

1. (S/WN) South Africa has been constructing an extensive network of military installations in northern Namibia since the mid-1960s to support counterinsurgent (COIN) operations against the forces of the Southwest African People's Organization (SWAPO).^{*} While a majority of these installations have been newly built or enlarged since Angolan independence in November 1975, satellite imagery shows that further expansion of facilities is currently taking place at six major South African airfields and military bases in the Border Operational Area (BOA)^{**} (Figure 1). This report presents pertinent details, a chronology of activity, and imagery of the construction projects at each of these six installations.

OVERVIEW

2. (S/WN) Since late August 1981 when South African forces conducted Operation PROTEA—the largest combined air-ground cross-border strike into southern Angola since 1976—imagery of the larger air and ground installations in the BOA has shown that permanent barracks and storage and support buildings are being added at five of these facilities, and at Ruacana, a separate, new military camp has been built. A particularly interesting feature of this current construction program is the addition of barracks at these military bases. With the exception of the large South African Defense Forces (SADF) logistics complex at Grootfontein Army Camp [redacted] squad-sized and general-purpose tents have been the typical means of billeting personnel at installations and camps of all sizes in the BOA. Additional construction consists of logistics-related projects that include new or expanded ammunition storage facilities and the expansion of fuel storage capacity at Ondangwa Airfield. Since many of these construction projects were observed in the early stages and appear to be continuing, additional reporting will be necessary to provide a more accurate assessment of South African intentions to improve their capabilities in northern Namibia. This is particularly applicable to Ondangwa Airfield where a significant expansion of support facilities is underway.

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DESCRIPTION

3. (S/WN) Construction of a new, separate military camp was almost complete at Ruacana Airfield in the northwestern corner of the Ovamboland (Figure 2). The camp, enclosed by an earthen wall with 13 machine gun/automatic weapons firing positions, consists of a cruciform-

^{*}A summary of the location and general characteristics of the airfields, airstrips, military camps, and strongpoints in northern Namibia is presented in the following report:

NPIC. Z-20145/81, IAR-0180/81, *South African Military Activity in Northern Namibia (S)*, Oct 81 (SECRET, [redacted])

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^{**}The term Border Operational Area (BOA) is used by the South Africans to refer to the four homelands—Kaokoveld, Ovamboland, Okavangoland, and the Caprivi—that are adjacent to Angola and where COIN operations are staged against SWAPO.

shaped command bunker, 14 storage and support buildings, and four personnel bunkers. Personnel will probably be housed in tents when the camp becomes fully occupied. Although construction apparently began on the camp in late August 1981, it appeared to be complete by mid-May 1982 except for grading on the road system, earth covering of the command bunker, and erection of tents. This new facility will apparently replace a tent camp in the nearby support area of Ruacana Airfield (not shown on graphic). The number of tents at the airfield has been steadily decreasing and a vehicle shed was being dismantled. A deployed field artillery (FA) battery remains at the airfield and there are no indications that it will be relocated elsewhere in the Ruacana area. In addition to the new military camp, several defensive measures aimed at halting infiltration from across the Angolan border have been observed in the Ruacana area since mid-1981. The dual-lane road leading eastward through Ovamboland from Ruacana has been paved, presumably to counter the threat from land mines. Vegetation has also been cleared on either side of the road, and a parallel fence has been built on the north side of the road. There is currently no available imagery that will allow a determination to be made as to how far eastward in Ovamboland these measures extend. South African troop strength in the Ruacana area, in addition to the FA battery, includes at least one infantry battalion whose primary mission is to defend the Ruacana Hydroelectric Plant and the irrigation canal system in western Ovamboland. The probable headquarters for this battalion is at Ruacana Military Camp Southwest (BE 1.5 nm southwest of Ruacana Airfield.

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4. (S/WN) Construction, first observed in October 1981, was still underway on an administration and barracks complex at Oshakati Military Installation, the SADF headquarters for Sector 10 which encompasses all of Ovamboland (Figure 3). There are four administration buildings, at least six barracks, foundations for three additional probable barracks, and three storage/support buildings in this portion of the installation which formerly contained a tent bivouac area. Other ongoing projects (not shown on graphic) at Oshakati include the addition of a large cruciform-shaped command bunker, first observed in January 1982, adjoining a headquarters-type building and a natural-surfaced airstrip. Although construction on the airstrip was first seen in October 1981, continual grading of the runway surface and surrounding area suggests that either the runway will have a permanent surface or that parking or support facilities will be added in the near future. Among the units normally stationed at Oshakati are a Buffel-equipped motorized infantry battalion and one field engineering company.

5. (S/WN) Perhaps the most extensive expansion of facilities is taking place at Ondangwa Airfield, the primary tactical fighter base in Ovamboland. In the southern portion of the airfield's support area, permanent barracks and administration and storage buildings were observed under construction, apparently replacing tent camps and temporary storage sheds (Figure 4). This expansion is continuing as the road system is being widened and enlarged; ground clearing suggests that additional buildings will be erected. Since February 1982, a large area has been incorporated into the airfield by extending the external security perimeter from the west end of the asphalt runway to the north end of the natural-surfaced runway. By mid-May 1982, four buildings and two building foundations, all of which are protected by an earthen wall, and six probable radar mounds had been built in this new support area (not shown on graphic). Fuel capacity at this airfield, which along with Grootfontein Airfield supports air strikes into Angola, has also been expanded. Two semiburied fuel tanks with a pipeline system were added during September and October 1981 and the foundation for two additional large storage tanks were in an early stage of construction in May 1982.

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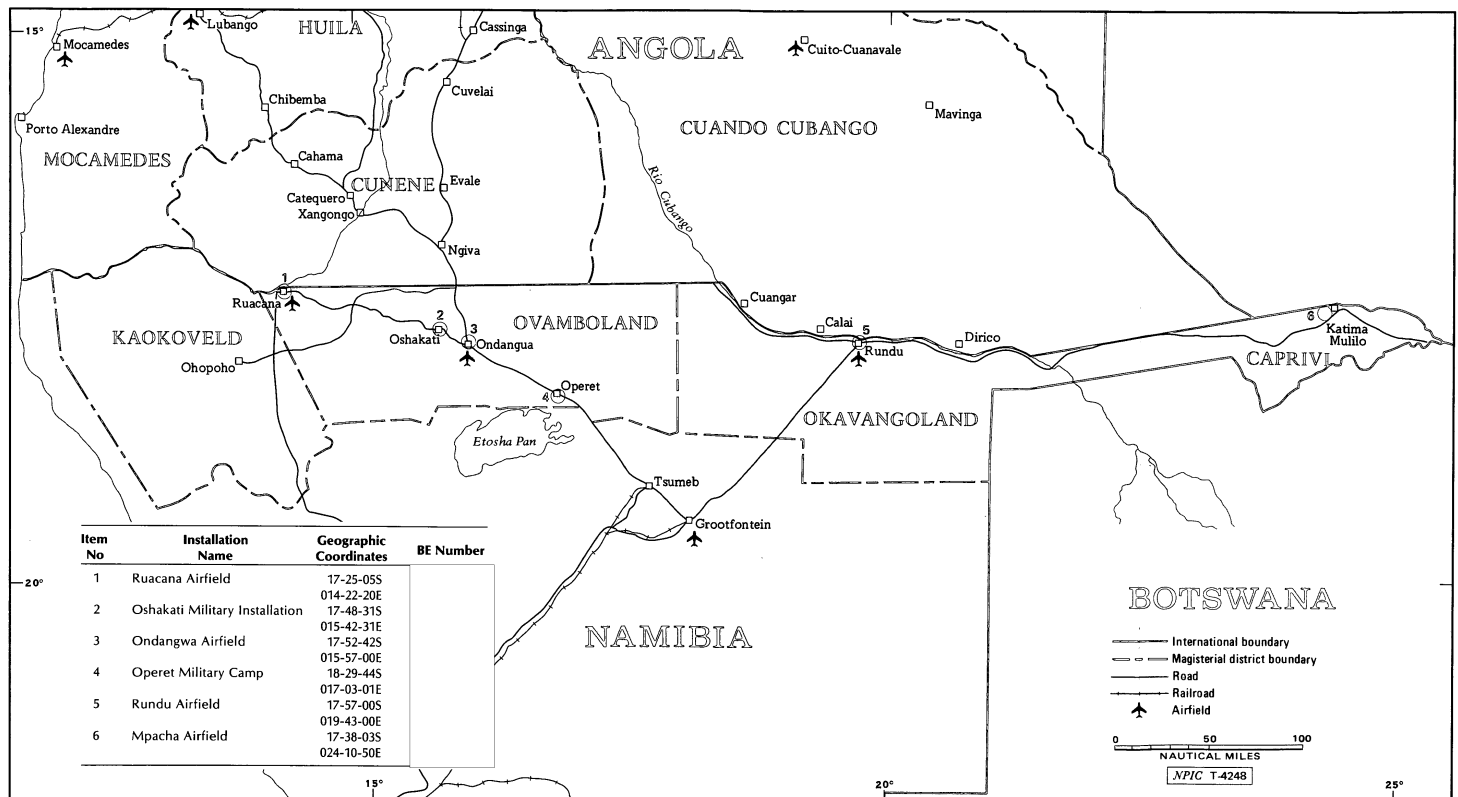


FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN INSTALLATIONS IN NORTHERN NAMIBIA WHERE EXPANSION IS TAKING PLACE

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6. (S/WN) A large ammunition storage facility was almost complete at Operet Military Camp in southern Ovamboland. Construction on the eight-bay quonset storage facility began in early November 1981 and, with the exception of earth covering, had been externally completed by mid-May 1982 (Figure 5). This new storage facility replaced a revetted temporary storage area that formerly consisted of tents and small quonset shelters that were not earth covered. Tents are the basic structures at the camp with the exception of two large vehicle storage sheds that were built during March and April 1981, one large administration building, and several support buildings. Operet houses a Ratel-equipped mechanized infantry battalion and also serves as a transit point for many of the SADF units enroute to and returning from duty at camps closer to the Angolan border. A high level of activity is usually observed here prior to larger scale cross-border operations against SWAPO installations in southern Angola.

7. (S/WN) Elsewhere in the BOA, construction activity has been observed at two major airfields, Rundu and Mpacha. Two separate barracks compounds and an annex to the ammunition storage facility have been added at Rundu Airfield. Rundu Airfield is the SADF headquarters for Sector 20 which encompasses Okavangoland and the western portion of the Caprivi Strip. Work on the larger of the two barracks areas (Figure 6) began in December 1981 as quonset-type storage buildings were removed from an area that was serving as a general-purpose storage facility. Following the grading of the area, construction of barracks and support buildings began in February 1982. By early May 1982, construction was almost complete on the larger area that contains at least 14 barracks buildings and 20 assorted storage and support buildings. Six additional barracks (not shown on graphic) were also under construction in the other barracks area. An annex to the airfield's ammunition storage facility had been completed by early February 1982. The additional storage capacity of six earth-covered, quonset-type sheds supplements the 16 quonset storage sheds in the southern portion of the support area.

8. (S/WN) The sixth SADF installation where an expansion of facilities is underway is Mpacha Airfield, 9 nm southwest of Katima Mulilo Military Camp [] the headquarters for Sector 70 (eastern Caprivi). Since late December 1981, construction has been proceeding at a slow pace on a probable barracks and storage area on the eastern edge of the support area at the airfield (Figure 7). By [] there were two vehicle sheds and at least six building foundations in an area adjacent to the site of an abandoned tent camp. The capacity of the airfield's ammunition storage will double after the completion of a seven-bay quonset storage facility similar to those seen at other major installations in the BOA. This facility is adjacent to an existing revetted ammunition storage facility (not shown on graphic).

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REFERENCES**IMAGERY**

(S/WN) All relevant satellite imagery acquired through [] was used in the preparation of this report.

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(S) Comments and queries regarding this report are welcome. They may be directed to [] Third World Forces Division, Imagery Exploitation Group, NPIC, []

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